

HONORING THE LIFE AND LEGACY
OF CIVIL WAR VETERAN ALEX-
ANDER JOHNSON

HON. ELISSA SLOTKIN

OF MICHIGAN

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 27, 2023

Ms. SLOTKIN. Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to a man who should have been hailed as a hero, but for too long his story was lost in history. Alexander Johnson was a Black Civil War Veteran who lived and worked in Owosso in the late 1800s, and when a group of white residents chased most Black folks out of town, Johnson and two other Black men refused to go.

Born in Tennessee in 1833, Johnson fled slavery and made his way to Michigan before enlisting in a Union regiment of African Americans in Kalamazoo to fight in the Civil War, then moving to Canada at the war's end, and later returning to Michigan to settle in Owosso with his wife.

No one knows for sure why he chose Owosso. Some historians believe Johnson's wife may have had family nearby. Others surmise he might have had connections to a home in Owosso rumored to be part of the Underground Railroad, and still others say that at the time, the growing community was a place where people of all races moved to explore economic opportunity. Whatever the reason, Owosso is where Alexander Johnson chose to put down roots, opening up a downtown barbershop and was, by all accounts, a well-liked businessman and respected member of the community.

Unfortunately, the good times did not last long, as racial tensions grew and the Ku Klux Klan became active in the county. The tensions culminated in 1871 when 40 white vigilantes gathered together and attempted to drive all the Black residents out of town. There is little we know about this dark moment in Owosso's history, but we do know that Alexander Johnson was a light that would not be extinguished. Johnson stayed in Owosso, along with two other Black men, until he died. In 1907 Johnson received a military burial at Oak Hill Cemetery in Owosso, and his story was buried with him for more than 100 years.

There are those who seek to ignore or even wipe away the more painful pieces of our history, and there are those who understand that we cannot ever be great without acknowledging our failures, learning from our mistakes, and moving forward with a commitment to grow. The Owosso Rotary Club falls into the latter category, as they were the ones not just to uncover Johnson's story, but to acknowledge it and honor it as a piece of Owosso's history.

Alexander Johnson was formally recognized by the Owosso Rotary on Veterans Day 2021 with a solemn ceremony at his gravesite. It is only fitting that I, too, join in paying tribute to this brave man whose convictions led him first out of slavery, then to fight for a country he believed in, to establish the life he wanted, and to stay in the community that he loved. May his memory be a blessing and an inspiration to us all.

REMEMBERING JAYNE HARPER
PLANK

HON. JAMIE RASKIN

OF MARYLAND

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 27, 2023

Mr. RASKIN. Mr. Speaker, I rise, with Congressman ERIC SWALWELL, to honor the remarkable life of my constituent, Jayne Harper Plank, who passed away on February 23, 2023. Jayne dedicated her life to civic service, philanthropy, and historic preservation, and she will be greatly missed by her beloved family, her many friends, and our entire community.

Jayne grew up in Washington, D.C. and graduated from George Washington University. She served on the Kensington Town Council for 7 years and in 1974 became the first woman elected mayor of Kensington, ultimately serving 4 terms.

In honor of her extraordinary civic service to the town, the renovated Kensington Cabin, originally built in 1934, was renamed the Mayor Jayne H. Plank Kensington Cabin.

In 1982, President Reagan appointed Jayne as the Director of Intergovernmental Affairs at the State Department, a position she held for 5 years. Jayne served as a liaison to governors, mayors, county officials and state legislators on the administration's policies. She also worked as a cryptologic linguist for the National Security Agency.

Jayne was active in historic preservation, philanthropic and civic organizations. She was the first woman elected President of the Maryland Municipal League and the first woman to serve as the State of Maryland's representative to the National League of Cities.

Jayne was also appointed to the Christopher Columbus Quincentenary Jubilee Commission and served on the Maryland Heritage Areas Authority, the Board of Trustees of Tudor House in Georgetown, and the Maryland Historical Society. She was active with the Women's Leadership Group of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Washington and the Citizen's Association of Georgetown. In 2016, Sister Cities International recognized Jayne for her work building strong international relationships.

Jayne was the beloved wife of the late William H. Plank, Sr. She is survived by her loving family, including her sons William Plank, Stuart Plank, John Scott Plank, Colin Harper Plank and Kevin Audette Plank; her grandchildren, Jack, Casey, Eve, Jesse, Campbell, Talya, Aitan, James and Katherine; and sisters Peggy DeFranceaux and Donna Miller.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in honoring the remarkable life and legacy of my trailblazing constituent, Jayne Harper Plank.

CELEBRATING THE CENTENNIAL
OF THE VETERANS OF FOREIGN
WARS DEPARTMENT OF VIR-
GINIA

HON. ROBERT J. WITTMAN

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 27, 2023

Mr. WITTMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the centennial of the Veterans

of Foreign Wars Department of Virginia (Virginia VFW). For the last 100 years and counting, the Virginia VFW has provided critical services and support to Virginia's veterans.

The Veterans of Foreign Wars National Headquarters formally chartered the Virginia VFW in February 1923. The Virginia VFW's members then formally organized in March 1923 in Norfolk, Virginia. Its founding members included veterans from the Spanish-American War and World War I. Membership in the Virginia VFW has grown substantially since its founding in 1923: it originally had 13 Posts and 663 members; now, it has 128 Posts and over 40,000 members. The Virginia VFW's membership includes members from all branches of the military and represents conflicts over the past 100 years.

The Virginia VFW's mission is: "To foster camaraderie among United States veterans of overseas conflicts. To serve our veterans, the military and their families. To advocate on behalf of all veterans."

The Virginia VFW advocated for the establishment of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for the passage of the Montgomery GI Bill, the Blue Water Navy Vietnam Veterans Act of 2019, the elimination of the Survivor Benefit Plan (SBP) Dependency and Indemnity Compensation (DIC) offset, and the PACT Act. These are just a few of the many pieces of legislation they successfully supported that have helped countless veterans.

Additionally, the Virginia VFW's Service Claims Agents ensured that Virginia veterans received over \$13 million in earned benefits that otherwise may have been lost. Furthermore, Virginia VFW members avidly support their local communities. In the last five years, the Virginia VFW's members volunteered for 1,233,783 hours and donated \$9,155,822—of which the combined value is \$41,840,483. I have no doubt that the Virginia VFW will continue to fulfill its mission.

Mr. Speaker, I ask you to rise with me in celebration and honor of the centennial of the Veterans of Foreign Wars Department of Virginia. May God bless the Virginia VFW and its members as they continue to serve veterans, veterans' families, and their communities.

RECOGNIZING MR. GERALD MIXON

HON. SANFORD D. BISHOP, JR.

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Monday, February 27, 2023

Mr. BISHOP of Georgia. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to extend my personal congratulations and best wishes to an exceptional community leader and outstanding citizen, Mr. Gerald Mixon, on his retirement as the Planning Director of the Middle Flint Area Planning and Development Corporation and the River Valley Regional Commission after 47 years of service. His retirement celebration was held on February 17, 2023 at the River Valley Regional Commission in Americus, Georgia.

For nearly five decades, Gerald has been a dedicated leader in the Middle and Southwest Georgia community, helping to bring much-needed resources and development opportunities to multiple counties in Georgia's Second District, including Dooly, Macon, Marion, Schley, Sumter, Taylor, and Webster counties. During his tenure, he has successfully applied